

11

Cathy Feldman-Duncan, Testimony for House Standing Committee Meeting September 11, 2013

My name is Cathy Feldman-Duncan, and I am a resident of Canton, Michigan. I appreciate being given the opportunity to express my concerns about bicycle safety in reference to House Bills 4792 and 4799, with regard to injury or death to vulnerable roadway users.

Eight years ago I began serious road biking for several reasons, including improvement of my health and weight management. Not only have I lost a tremendous amount of weight, but another benefit of long distance road biking is improved mental awareness, emotional well-being and de-stressing. In addition, it is very pleasurable to bike ride. On average, I usually ride between 10 and 25-miles per ride, 5 to 7 times per week, 7 to 8 months a year. My new goal is to participate in a long-distance biking event.

The reason I am here today is to share with you some of the negative experiences that I have had sharing the road with motor vehicles.

1. On numerous occasions, I'm often honked at or sworn at by Drivers who feel that bicyclists do not belong on the road. In response to Mr. Heise's Facebook posting about this meeting last week, several people stated that bikers are a "menace" and a "nuisance", and that we do not have the right to be on the road. I was also told that I need to take my hobby elsewhere, to a park, where I will not be in the way of Drivers. Drivers are often antagonistic or even violent toward bicyclists.
2. Drivers use their vehicles like weapons!
3. Riding in a park is very limited, and there are not a lot of options for riding that way, especially in Canton. In order to get to these parks, one must ride their bike to it on the road! I know of one bike path along the Lower Rouge, but in order to reach the entrance of the path, a biker must ride along Canton Center Road where there are no shoulders or sidewalks.
4. On several occasions when I have been on a sidewalk, (Sheldon Road, north of Ford Road); Drivers are often texting or talking on their cell phones. One woman was texting and her car began rolling into the sidewalk which was part of the entrance to the parking lot at Walgreens. She had no idea that I was present, and as a result of her negligence, I had to stop suddenly which caused me to fall off of my bike. I was not traveling fast at that time and I remember this incident so well because I was shaking and in pain afterward.
5. While stopped at a crosswalk waiting for the signal to change at the intersection of Ford and Canton Center Roads, a Driver ran a left turn signal and almost hit me as I walked my bike across the intersection with the Walk indicator on white.
6. When crossing intersections, Drivers consistently cross over the white line that indicates "No crossing beyond this point". It is so frustrating not being able to cross in a pedestrian crossing. Drivers often bolt through a red light without stopping to make right turns, or they run the red to make a left turn, and in each instance, it is a life-threatening event for the bicyclist.
7. If a Driver has stopped at an intersection, the new trend is to slowly role through the intersection until the signal changes to green, and the car is completely blocking the intersection.
8. Please pass a statewide law that Drivers must be hands free when driving, through the use of Blue Tooth devices.

When riding, I wear reflective clothing, a helmet and gloves. I do not use an iPod so that I can hear well. My bike is equipped with a headlight and a rear light, and both have bright flashing features. I ride to the right and I use hand signals. I stop at traffic signals and yield even when the signal is clear. I'm also in the position of being a Driver and a Bicyclist which has heightened my awareness of being a better and safer driver who is willing to yield and share the road.

My home is off of Geddes Road, between Canton Center and Beck Roads. There are a few sidewalks by my house that are also used by pedestrians. Many bikers in our community opt to ride on the road in order to go at faster speeds and long distances, and often times, the sidewalks abruptly end, or there are roads that have no sidewalk or bike path at all. The crosswalks at Geddes and Canton Center don't have Walk-Don't Walk indicators in all directions. The crosswalks at Beck and Geddes lack indicators for all directions as well. The roads lack adequate shoulders to ride on and a biker is forced to use the actual road until a side walk or shoulder is available. In addition, the condition of some of the roads is similar to a bridal path, but Wayne County has had significant difficulty with road repair, a completely different matter. But is there something that can be done? i.e. in Washtenaw County Geddes road has been rebuilt with added rotaries at several intersections and as soon as the Wayne county line is reached, the road is in deplorable condition.

While I fully agree that raising the monetary penalty and/or jail time for dealing with drivers who have committed the crime of a moving violation causing injury or death to vulnerable roadway users, I am concerned that this could cause even more Driver antagonism and violence toward bicyclists. In addition to the penalties and/or jail time, I would implore you to please consider the following:

1. Implement a Driver and Bicyclist Safety program through the use of Public Service Announcements, as well as on newscasts and in newspapers throughout the state of Michigan. When I lived in California, there was a large Share the Road campaign that was highly effective in heightening Driver and Bicyclist awareness of laws regarding road use. Many Californians use biking as their main form of transportation to and from work and this cuts down on traffic and fuel consumption.
2. Make the use of hand signs to be used by both drivers and bicyclists a part of the Driver's Manual and Licensing Tests.
3. Improve signage! There are virtually NO SIGNS that ever indicate to drivers to beware of pedestrian crossing or sharing the road and yielding to Bicyclists or wheel chairs. I have seen a few signs in Plymouth, and I've also witnessed Drivers bolting through these crossings while pedestrians are present.
4. Improve road markings. The white lines on roads are often faded and difficult for Drivers to see. Markings on the shoulders of roads should be brighter, and crossings should have larger markings that are easily seen, as well as a warning to STOP before the intersection and allow for pedestrians, bicyclists and wheelchairs.
5. There should be consistent Walk-Don't Walk indicators at EVERY intersection. So many intersections have antiquated markings and/or signals, or flashing red signals which need to be updated.
6. There should be a Bike Lane that is properly marked that should be incorporated into all of the road improvements.

7. If this is not possible, then sidewalks or bike paths should be present in heavily populated areas along roadways.
8. Law Enforcement should be stopping Drivers who run red lights and who don't stop in intersections, or who turn on red without stopping. I see a myriad of speed traps along Michigan Avenue and U.S. 12, but rarely have I seen Drivers stopped for the above listed infractions.

It is imperative that in updating the law, that public awareness be raised through education through the use of Public Service Announcements and written literature. Many Drivers are unaware of their responsibility in sharing the road and as a result, remain ignorant and/or angry as to what the law is and how they are indeed responsible not only to other vehicles, but to bicyclists and pedestrians, equally. In addition to more stringent fines and jail time, education and awareness are critical to changing public opinion and for Drivers to be more cooperative and knowledgeable about the law.

Thank you for your time today. I would be happy to provide you with photos of the intersections and road conditions that exist in my community, and I would be happy to speak at future meetings and/or hearings.